

Intense rainfall in mid- and late April cause widespread floods in East Africa and Yemen

KEY MESSAGES

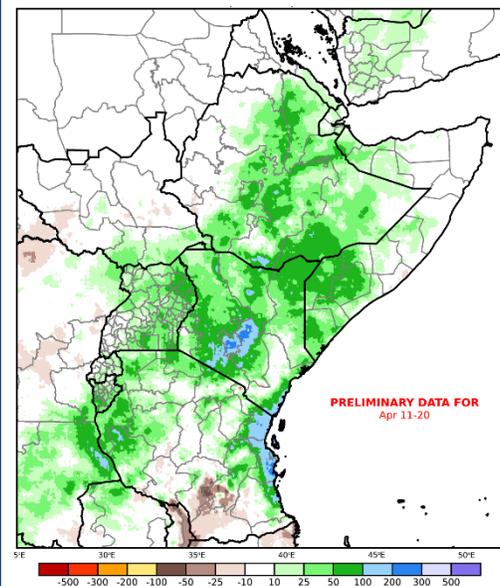
- Seasonal rains intensified across East Africa in the past week, resulting in widespread floods that caused human fatalities and displacement, as well as crop damage and loss of household assets in parts of Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Somalia, Burundi, and Yemen.
- The on-going exceptional seasonal rains are mostly attributed to sustained warmer-than-normal Indian Ocean, coupled with favorable atmospheric conditions over much of East of Africa.
- Cropping and rangeland conditions remain generally favorable in response to the seasonal rains, despite the adverse impacts of flooding in parts of the region. However, localized damage from desert locust has been reported in *Belg*-cropping areas of Ethiopia, southeastern South Sudan, and northeastern Uganda and there is a high risk of localized damage in eastern and central Kenya and northwestern Somalia.
- The rainfall forecast indicates an increased likelihood for continued moderate to locally very heavy rains in most parts of the region in coming week, with heightened risks of flash-floods in flood prone areas. However, rainfall intensity is expected to subside in mid-May.

SEASONAL PROGRESS

Torrential rainfall from mid- to late April marked the full establishment of the *Belg* rains in Ethiopia and *Gu* rains in Somalia, as well as the mid-point of the March to May long rains season in Kenya, Uganda, southeastern South Sudan, Rwanda, and Burundi. Rainfall was heaviest from April 11th to 20th in Ethiopia, southern Somalia, Kenya, Uganda, Burundi, and coastal Tanzania, where satellite-derived anomalies were in excess of 50-200 millimeters (mm) (Figure 1). In many areas, the heavy rains alleviated the rainfall deficits that were previously observed in early April and cumulative seasonal totals are well above average (Figure 2). However, cumulative rainfall deficits are recorded in localized areas of western Ethiopia, southern South Sudan, and western Uganda.

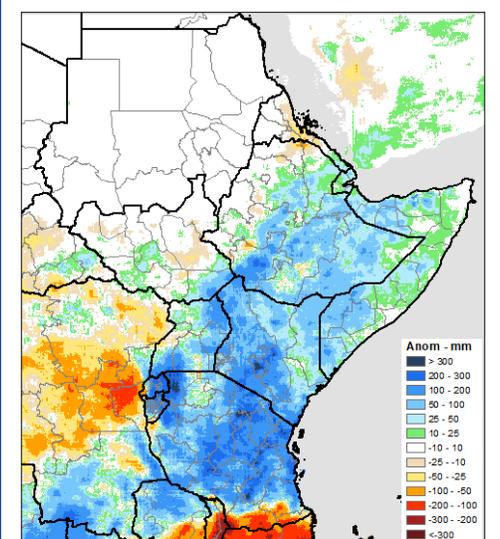
The heavy rains during the period of April 11-20 were ranked among the wettest on the 40-year record in several areas: central Kenya; central Ethiopia; the Mandera triangle area of Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia; parts of coastal Kenya and Tanzania; and parts of central and western Yemen. Regionally, flash floods and riverine floods have caused human fatalities and displaced tens of thousands of households, in addition to causing property and infrastructure damage and flooding cropland. In Kenya, available reports indicate that **more than 116 people have died and 40,000 people have been displaced**. In Uganda, 200 people have been displaced near Lake Victoria and Lake Kyoga; **an additional 140,000 people are at risk of being displaced** due to flash floods. In Ethiopia, flash floods occurred in Diredawa and in two localities of SNNPR (Gamo and South Omo zones), where loss of human lives

Figure 1. CHIRPS preliminary rainfall performance (anomalies in mm) in comparison to average (1981-2010), April 11 - 20, 2020



Source: FEWS NET/UCSB Climate Hazards Center

Figure 2. CHIRPS preliminary rainfall performance (anomalies in mm) in comparison to average (1981-2010), March 1 – April 30, 2020



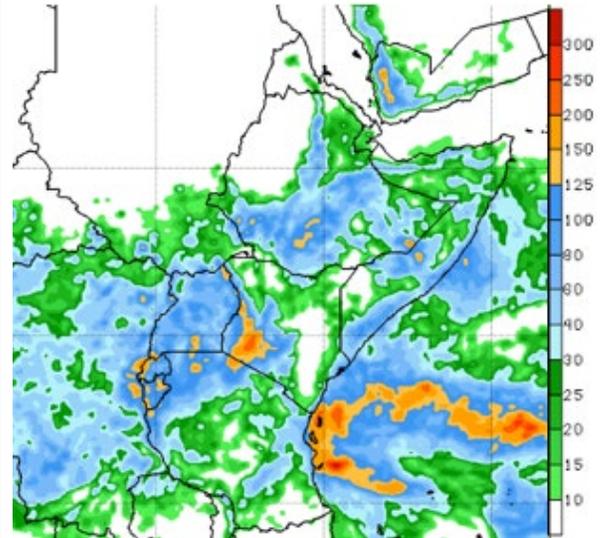
Source: FEWS NET/USGS

East Africa is expected to remain generally wet, with widespread moderate to heavy rains and an increased likelihood for continued widespread floods in the region. Regions of elevated risks of flooding include the Tanzania/Kenya coastal strip and surrounding regions as well as the Lake Victoria basin and its surrounding regions in Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya. However, isolated areas of southeastern, eastern, and northern Kenya are expected to be uncharacteristically sunny and dry during this period.

Although the March to May seasonal rains are forecast to continue into mid-May, there is an increased likelihood that the intensity of rainfall will begin to subside slightly over northern Kenya and also over parts of southern and central Tanzania. Meanwhile, East Africa coastal regions are expected to maintain abnormally heavy rains at the peak of their seasonal rains, which often occurs in May. Lower rainfall intensity is also likely in parts of southern Somalia, mid-way through its April to June *Gu* season.

Sustained moderate to very heavy rains for the next 1-2 weeks, are likely to result into continued well above average seasonal rainfall performance over much of East Africa. Early season agricultural production prospects look generally favorable, but, with anticipated varied levels of flood severity and their associated adverse impacts in most flood prone areas. Seasonal and permanent river levels will continue to inundate surrounding agricultural areas with expected crop and property losses.

Figure 5. Week 1 GFS rainfall forecast in mm, valid through May 05, 2020



Source: NOAA/CPC